

**SUMMARY OF THE
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 25, 2000**

The Proficiency Testing (PT) Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference, on Tuesday, January 25, 2000. The meeting was led by its chair, Ms. Barbara Burmeister of the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene. *The main purpose of this meeting was to discuss finalization of Section 2.0 Interim Guidance Document, the finalization of the PT Fields of Testing and acceptance criteria, and the finalization of the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). Other items to be discussed will be NELAC issues related to the PT Committee's upcoming meeting in June and any other comments received as of this meeting.*

STATUS OF ACTION ITEMS

The status of the Action Items from the teleconference on January 11, 2000 is as follows:

- Ms. Burmeister sent the finalized changes to Section 2.0 Guidance Document to the committee for review.
- The list of PT fields of testing and acceptance criteria were sent to Ms. Burmeister for review and then will be sent to the committee for final review and comments. These will then be sent to Ms. Jeanne Hankins of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), the Transition Committee and the NELAP Accrediting Authority (AA) Group for final review and adoption.
- The committee will re-evaluate the list of UCMR (Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule) contaminants, propose adding them to the PT fields of testing, and develop acceptance criteria for them.
- Test questions developed by the PT committee for assessors were finalized and forwarded to Ms. Hankins and Ms. Margo Hunt of the USEPA.
- The FAQs have been finalized. Ms. Marykay Steinman will review the change suggested in today's meeting. Once complete it will be submitted to Board of Directors for review.

Section 2.0 Interim Guidance Document

Ms. Burmeister made changes to the guidance document as recommended by Ms. Roxanne Robinson from the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA) and distributed the document to the committee. The changes were accepted by the committee. Ms. Burmeister will send the document to Ms. Hankins, the Transition Committee, and the NELAP AA Group for final review and adoption.

Finalization of the PT Fields of Testing and Acceptance Criteria

The revised list of PT Fields of Testing (FOT) and acceptance criteria were submitted to Ms. Burmeister. The committee discussed the list of UCMR contaminants and whether or not they

should be added to the present FOT list. The question was raised as to whether or not these compounds will be listed in the USEPA's criteria document. In response to this question, the comment was made that the criteria document is final and there will not be any revisions. The committee will need to determine the best way for the the USEPA to get this information out to the reference material producers. Suggestions included posting this information on the web pages of the Chemical Reference Materials Manufacturers Association (CMMRA) (www.cmmra.org), or Mr. Jerry Parr's newsletter, or even the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)/National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program (NVLAP) mailing list by e-mailing to all the suppliers.

The new UMCR contaminants will not have fixed limits until historical data has been developed. Until then, acceptance criteria for these analytes will be +/- 2 standard deviations. Only 9 of the 13 compounds will be added at this time. Mr. Ed Glick will email the list of these 9 compounds to Mr. Matt Caruso. Mr. Chuck Wibby suggested that the volatiles in soil be changed back to the low level samples. Ms. Burmeister suggested that this finalized list be sent to her by January 28, 2000 so that it can be reviewed and sent to Ms. Hankins, the Transition Committee, and the NELAP AA Group by February 7, 2000.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Ms. Steinman reviewed changes to the PT FAQs. Mr. Glick suggested that the following change be made to FAQ #2. (New text is double underlined and deleted text is struck out.)

The decision to require PT samples twice a year was not made arbitrarily. The NELAC PT Committee's goal was to protect public health and improve laboratory data quality. The Accrediting Authority monitors the quality of the laboratory data by the evaluation of PT sample analysis and on-site assessments. Because laboratories only receive on-site assessment on a ~~semi-annual~~ biennial schedule, PT data is the only tool used by the Accrediting Authority to monitor a laboratory's performance between assessments. The NELAC PT Standard must give the Accrediting Authority timely and adequate data by which to judge a laboratory's performance. A less frequent analysis of PT samples would be neither timely nor adequate while a more frequent analysis would be burdensome to the laboratories. The PT Committee felt that a frequency of twice a year best met NELAC's goal of protecting public health and improving environmental data quality and gave the Accrediting Authorities adequate data to monitor ongoing laboratory performance.

Ms. Burmeister suggested that the FAQs include the flow chart on the "accreditation process for non-Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) PT" that Mr. Jackson presented to the committee. The FAQs will then be resubmitted to Ms. Hankins for approval and posting on the NELAC Website.

NELAC VI Issues

- Time needed for PT session

Ms. Burmeister asked the committee to consider the length of time they felt was needed for the Sixth NELAC Annual Meeting. Mr. Caruso suggested that we only needed a ½ day as this is what the committee had at the Fifth NELAC Interim Meeting and there are not any new items to be brought to the floor that will require extensive discussions at this time.

- **Comments due date – March 1, 2000**
All comments are due to the committee chairs by March 1, 2000. There is a new format for comments located on the NELAC Website and instructions on how to complete the form are also found there.
- **Changes to chapter due date – April 27, 2000**
Committee revisions to the NELAC Standards are due by April 27, 2000.
- **Agenda due date – May 12, 2000**
Since the revised standards are due April 27th, the PT Committee will need to have a face-to-face meeting some time early in April.
- **Replacement committee members due date – May 12, 2000**
During the face-to-face meeting, the committee will need to discuss the election of two new members to the committee as there are two members rotating off this year.

ELAB Assignments to NELAC PT Committee

The Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB) has requested that the PT Committee write a report on anything that is not working with the NELAC PT Program. The report is due before NELAC VI (June 2000).

Test Questions for PT Chapter

Ms. Burmeister compiled a list of 60 test questions from PT Committee members for the NELAC assessor- training course. The test questions were accepted by the committee. Ms. Burmeister will send the list of questions to Ms. Hankins and Ms. Hunt at EPA.

Comments Received to Date

Comments received to date are as follows:

- Ms. Roxanne Robinson, A2LA (re: interim Section 2.0). These comments have been addressed and the changes have been made to the section “Section 2.0 Interim Guidance Document.”
- Mr. George Avery, Arkansas (re: permanent Section 2.0). Ms. Burmeister has distributed these comments to be discussed in a future conference call.
- Mr. Avery, Arkansas (re: PT FOT). These comments were discussed and the decision to continue discussion in future conference calls on “PT Fields of Testing and Acceptance Criteria.”
- Mr. Bennett Osborne, Oregon Environmental Lab Association (re: C.1.1). Ms. Burmeister will distribute these comments to be discussed in a future conference call.
- Mr. Stephen Arpie, Absolute Standards (re: PT questions). These comments have been discussed in the section “PT Fields of Testing and Acceptance Criteria.”

- Ms. Jane Jensen, California (re: interim section 2.0). The comments have been distributed and further comments will be discussed in a future conference call. Section 2.0, Interim Standards, cannot be changed from what was agreed on at the Fifth NELAC Interim Meeting.

Miscellaneous

Ms. Burmeister raised the following question, “If a PT sample for an analyte is available, but the analyte is not on the PT FOT list due to insufficient historical data for calculated acceptance criteria, how will sufficient data be collected?” The committee was informed that the PT Providers will meet as a group at the NELAC Annual or Interim meeting to see what has developed, and the PT committee could at that time start developing a database for any compounds that were discussed at these meetings. Until acceptance criteria are developed, AA’s cannot use these new analytes for accreditation decisions.

Ms. Burmeister asked for a volunteer to be the liaison between the PT committee and the Membership & Outreach (M&O) Committee. This liaison will attend the M&O session at the Interim and Annual meetings and answer questions about the PT chapter of the NELAC Standards.

The next meeting by teleconference will be February 8, 2000 from 1-3 p.m., EST.

ACTION ITEMS**PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 25, 2000**

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Ms. Barbara Burmeister will submit the Section 2.0 Interim Guidance Document to Ms. Jeanne Hankins.	2/7/00
2.	Mr. Matt Caruso and Mr. Chuck Wibby will add analytes from the UCMR (Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule) to the PT Fields of Testing list. They will then submit the list to the PT Committee for review.	1/28/00
3.	Ms. Marykay Steinman will revise the PT Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), add Larry Jackson's flowchart, and send the FAQs to the PT Committee for review.	1/28/00
4.	Ms. Burmeister will email the Program Policy and Structure Committee (Chapter 1) about the matrix questions that were brought up at the Interim meeting.	1/28/00
5.	Ms. Burmeister will email the Membership and Outreach Committee with the PT committee nomination for liaison.	2/2/00
6.	Mr. Glick will email the various groups discussed above to get the new analytes information out to the rest of the world	1/31/00

**PARTICIPANTS
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 25, 2000**

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